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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 003379

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [CH](#) [FR](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: FRANCE APOLOGIZES FOR MIX-UP BARRING U.S. MILITARY
EXCHANGE OFFICER FROM CHINA STUDY PROGRAM

REF: IIR 6 832 0445 05

Classified By: CDA ALEJANDRO WOLFF, REASON 1.4 B AND D

1. (C) A wrong call by a low-level French official was quickly reversed when we brought it to the attention of the MOD and MFA. At issue was the participation of Col. Ernest Herold, Chief of the Embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation, in the annual study trip sponsored by the Direction Generale d'Armements (DGA). This year's trip takes the 50-plus members of a DGA course to China, May 17-28. Col. Herold had earlier been told by course administrators that his participation in the visit would not be welcome. When the Embassy, after consulting with EUCOM, brought this to the attention of senior officials at the MOD and MFA, immediate action was taken to turn around what was described by an advisor to FM Barnier as a "stupid decision." All the high-level officials we spoke with registered their consternation over the episode, apologized, and assured us that the "bureaucratic screw-up" did not in any way result from political considerations. (Indeed, we understand the Germans and Italians experienced a similar series of events before they were included in the trip.)

2. (C) The source of the mix-up remains unclear. Col. Herold, who is enrolled in a course for advanced armament studies at the "Cours des Hautes Etudes d'Armement - CHEAR," France's equivalent of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in Washington, had originally been informed informally by the French school that the French Embassy in Beijing was uncomfortable with a U.S. student participating in the class trip (reftel). However, in response to our queries, the Defense Minister's Diplomatic Advisor Bertrand Besancenot, the MFA's Secretary-General (no.2) Jean-Pierre Lafon, and the FM's Counselor for North America Nicholas de Riviere, noted they had been unaware of the decision, but thought it unjustifiable and took immediate action to reverse it. Within little over two hours of our bringing the problem to their attention, these senior French officials had turned the decision around. A DGA official accompanied Col. Herold to the Chinese Embassy on May 17 to expedite visa issuance.

WOLFF